

*The Pains and Terrors of a Wounded Conscience
Insupportable.*

2110



SERMON

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

AT

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On the 3d of March, 1701.

PROV. xviii. 14. the latter part of the Verse.
A wounded Spirit who can bear?

By Sir WILLIAM DAWES, Baronet, D. D.
and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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Proverbs XVIII. 14. the latter part of the Verse.

A Wounded Spirit who can bear.

IN discoursing upon these Words, I shall endeavour to shew

First, What we are to understand here by a *wounded Spirit*.

Secondly, That such a *wounded Spirit* is indeed intollerable.

And then *lastly*, I shall conclude with some practical Reflections upon the whole.

First then, by a *wounded Spirit*, or as the words should be render'd, a *troubled and afflicted Spirit or Mind*, it is plain we are not to understand a Mind heavy laden and oppress'd with the common ill Accidents and Calamities of this Life: such as come upon us, wholly without any fault of ours, either immediately and directly from the Divine Providence it self, or at least, by the permission of that, from some other inferior Agent. And this, not only because the *wounded Spirit* in my Text is oppos'd to all such Evils (which are there call'd *Man's Infirmity*, that is, such as are natural and common to Man, *who is born to trouble as the Sparks fly upwards*) Job 5. 7. but also, because all Afflictions and Troubles of this kind, how sharp and grievous soever, are yet as is there declar'd, really tollerable. The Spirit or Mind of Man, or, as others would have it translated, a Manly Mind; a brave and generous Soul, fortifying and encouraging it self with some comfortable and heart'ning Considerations of Reason and Religion (as that all such Afflictions come from God, the just and wise and good Creatour disposer and governour of all things; that they are sent by him; out of infinite love and kindness to us;

to awaken us out of our Sins, and to fright us from them; to reduce us to our Duties, to try and quicken our Graces and Virtues, and by so doing to prepare and qualify us for his Favour; that they are always either proportion'd by him to our strength, or which is much at one, that our strength is assisted by his Grace, and thereby made sufficient for them; 2 Cor. 12. 9. that they cannot last long, to be sure, at the utmost, not longer then our Lives: and that after Death if we bear them patiently and contentedly, and endeavour to reap those good Fruits from them, which the Divine Providence design'd by them, we shall be rewarded for them with an *exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*) will find it an easie matter to *sustain* it self under all these *infirmities*. 2 Cor. 4. 17. And therefore

Secondly, By a *wounded Spirit* here, we are certainly to understand a *Mind* labouring under the burden and pressure of much worse Evils, than any of these. And what can that be? but, either,

First, A *Mind* distracted and torn in pieces, by the violence of those *boystrous, turbulent* and *vexatious Lusts* and *Passions*, which we are too apt to beget, cherish, and blow up into a flame within our own Breasts: such as *Ambition, Pride, Avarice, Revenge, Malice, Envy, Anger, Uncleanness*, and the rest of that *Hellish Crew*: which, whenever they singly, much more joyntly, take possession of a Man, destroy all his true Peace and Tranquility of Mind; and, by continually hurrying him on to new Projects, for their Gratification: plunging him in new Difficulties, by their rashness: vexing and fretting him with their Disappointments: pulling him different, nay perhaps contrary, ways to serve their various Humours: and still, the more they are serv'd and obey'd, clamouring yet louder for Service and Obedience: harrafs and torment his Soul, beyond all expression. Or

Secondly, A *Mind* sadly conscious to it self of an *abominably ill-spent Life*: of its having been in a continu-

ed course of Rebellion against the Laws of its own Reason, and the yet infinitely more perfect ones of an All-wise and All-good God: and of having thereby brought it self, not only under its own dislike and hatred, but also under the most severe Displeasure and dreadful Curse of God: within the verge of Hell, and almost within the feeling of those inconceivable Torments, which are there prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels. Matt. 25.

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And this is that wounded Spirit, which I intend now solely to insist upon. And, that I may not seem to some Men to talk only of a Chimæra of my own making, I shall beg leave to observe how frequently the very Heathens themselves (whose Authority, it is to be hop'd, will pass with our Admirers of Reason and Natural Religion, free and unquestion'd) speak of such a wounded Spirit as this, in their Writings; telling us over and over, Tull. Orat. pro Milon. *That so great is the Power of Conscience, that those, who have committed any Fault, live in perpetual fear of Punishment*; Plutarch. pag. 556. Edit. parif. *That many sorrows and greivous perturbations of Mind, Repentance and continual Tumults and Disorders; Diffidence concerning even their present State, and black and melancholy suspicions of their future Ones are the natural consequences of Mens evil Actions.* Senec. Ep. 97. 98. 105. *That, in proportion to Mens Sins, their Fears will grow upon them, and never let them be quiet; that for these, they will be scourged and mightily tormented.* Juvenal. Sat. 13. And Lastly, *That they Night and Day carry about in their own Breasts a Witness against themselves, which doth secretly terrify, lash and torture them, and fill them with dreadful apprehensions of Punishments to come.* Nay even Lucretius himself doth, lib. 1. lib. 3. more than once, acknowledge this to be the common case of Mankind, even while he blameth them for it, and supposeth their Fears, upon this account, to be altogether Childish and unreasonable, without the least Ground or Foundation in Nature, and the pure effects of Fancy, or Education.

But

But surely, with his good leave, it is much more likely, that such *universal* Fears, as he himself confesseth these to be; should proceed from some fix'd and uniform principle of *Nature* or *Reason*, common to all Mankind, than from the unsettled and perpetually varying ones of *Fancy* and *Education*; and consequently it must be allow'd to be highly probable, at least, that these Fears have some real Object existing in Nature to answer them, as all other such *universal* affections of our Minds are generally deem'd to have. And indeed, without supposing that they have so, I cannot possibly see what one wise or good end can be promoted by these Fears: and if so, Humane Nature must needs appear to be a very odd and unaccountable thing, having these Fears, as certain Seeds of Misery, sown in it, without any other Reason, or for any other end or purpose, than purely to make it miserable. Which, how consistent soever it may be with the Notion of a World huddled together by chance (as indeed any thing, how odd soever, may consist with that) yet it can never be reconcil'd to the Notion of an *All-wise* and *All-good* God, who created Mankind, and implanted these Fears in them.

Besides, let wicked Men pretend what they will, since, on the one hand, it is absolutely impossible for them to demonstrate, that there will be no such thing as a state of future Punishment for the Wicked: and since, on the other hand, it cannot be denied but that there are a great many, at least probable, Arguments that there will be such a State; there must ever be *just* and *reasonable* grounds for these Fears and mis-givings of Conscience: there must ever be (all things considered) not from *Fancy* or *Education*, but from *Natural* and *Rational* Conviction, Distrusts, Jealousies and Forebodeings upon our Minds, of a dreadful state of Punishment, to follow and do justice upon an habitual state of Sin.

And thus much I thought necessary to premise, in order to engage the attention even of natural *Men*, if any such there be here, to the following part of my Discourse; by shewing them breifly (tho' I doubt not but that they have full, very full, evidence of this within their own Breasts; if they would be so honest and ingenuous as to speak the Truth) even from the acknowledgements of the *best* and *wisest* of their own Heathen Friends, and from the very Dictates of that *Nature* and *Reason*, which they pretend so strictly to follow and obey, that there is, there must be, such a *wounded Spirit*, as we are now discoursing of. And, having done this, I shall the more cheerfully proceed.

Secondly, To prove that such a *wounded Spirit* is indeed intolerable. And this, I hope I shall be able to make very plain, both from *Reason* and *Experience*.

First, From *Reason*, which seems readily to admit these two things.

First, That a *wounded Spirit* is the greatest Evil, or Affliction, that can possibly befall us, in this Life.

Seco dly, That there is no assistance any where to be had, to enable us to support our selves under it: but, on the contrary, all those things, which us'd to administer Comfort to us, under our other Afflictions, turn powerfully against us, and mightily help to encrease this.

First, That a *wounded Spirit* is the greatest, Evil or Affliction, that can possibly befall us, in this Life, There are no Afflictions so sharp and pungent, as those, which do most immediately affect, our most sensible part, the *Mind*: and nothing sure can affect that, like the lashes of our own Reason and Conscience, like the dread of an offended God, and the imminent danger of falling into Infinite and Everlasting Torments. It is no small uneasiness to a Man, to be unable to approve and justify himself to his own mind, and to lie under a sentence

of Condemnation from his own Reason ; but it is an uneasiness, above all uneasinesses, to lie under so much as the apprehension, much more the certain expectation of God's wrath : nay, and of that fiercest and hottest wrath too, which he has laid up in store, for the Ungodly, against the great and terrible *day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Rom. 2. 5. This wrath doth so infinitely transcend and surpass all other the Dispensations of God's wrath against Sinners in this world : that the very Fears of this must needs be a great deal more terrible and greivous, than the actual feeling of those. Besides, there is this aggravating Circumstance peculiar to a *wounded Spirit*, that, while all other afflictions grow easier and lighter by continuance, and by degrees wear off and decline towards an end, this alone is always encreasing ; because always coming nearer and nearer to that, which, tho' an end to all other Afflictions, is the beginning of such an additional load to this, as it makes me even tremble to think of. To all which add, that this is such an Affliction as brings all other Afflictions along with it : for a *broken Spirit*, as *Solomon* observes, *drieth the bones,* Prov. 17. 22. that is, destroyeth our Health, spoils our Taste of every thing that is good and pleasant, and, like a secret fire within us, is continually preying upon us and devouring us.

Farther yet, it is not to be doubted but that, besides the nature of the thing it self, God doth, in Judgment, widen and enlarge this wound upon the *Spirits* of Sinners, and, as the Prophet *Jeremiab* expresseth it, *add grief to their sorrow ;* Jer. 45. 3. by withdrawing the comfortable presence of his *Holy Spirit* from them, quick'ning their sense of their Guilt, representing to them, in an extraordinary manner, the danger of their Condition, giving them a Plainer sight and apprehension of the Torments of Hell, and thereby bringing them, as it were, nearer to them. All this, as it is very agreeable to Reason to suppose of God, after he has

been, beyond all measure, affronted and exasperated by Sinners; so is it exactly consistent with his way of dealing with obstinate Sinners, in all other cases, which is to add to those Mischiefs which they have willfully brought upon themselves; *stopping the ears*, and *hardened the hearts* of those, who would not hear when he called, nor *relent* when he punish'd: *Isai. 6. 10. Rom. 1. 18. giving those up to a reprobate mind, who did not like to retain him in their knowledge; and sending strong delusions on them, who received not the love of the truth, that they should believe a lie. 2. Theff. 2. 11.* And moreover, it is expressly said of *Saul*, when he was under grief and trouble of Mind, upon account of his having disobey'd and provok'd God, *that the spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled, or, as it is in the Margent, terrified him. 1. Sam. 16. 14.*

Well then might the Son of *Sirach* pray, *Give me any plague, but the plague of thy heart, Ecclus. 25. 13.* and well may we cry out, with *St. Ambrose*, *What pain is more grievous than that of a wounded Conscience, is not this rather to be avoided, than Weakness, than Poverty, than Banishment, nay than Death it self? lib. 3. Offic. cap. 4.* And, with *St. Austin*, *Among all the troubles and afflictions of the Mind of Man, there is none greater than that of a guilty Conscience. In. Ps. 45.* And yet, as great, as unspeakably great, as this Affliction is, there is still one terrible and enflaming Circumstance of it behind, and that is

Secondly, That there is no assistance any where to be had, to enable us to support our selves under it; but on the contrary, all those things, which us'd to administer Comfort to us, under our other Afflictions, turn powerfully against us, and mightily help to encrease this. How great soever our Afflictions or Sufferings are in themselves, yet so long as we are any way assisted with Succours and Supports, in proportion to their greatness be it what it will, they are still tolerable. But when an exceeding

exceeding, and more than ordinarily, heavy burthen is laid upon us, and we have not only no new additional strength and assistance communicated to us, but have even our own ordinary strength and abilities very much impair'd, nay perhaps quite taken away, it must needs be impossible for us to stand under it. And this alas ! is the misery of our present case. Our burthen, as you have seen, is beyond all conception great ; and yet, wherever we turn our eyes, whither within to our selves or without to others, we shall not be able to find any thing, to give us the least help or support under it.

If we look into our selves, and consult first, as is most natural, our own *Reason*, for aid : that cannot but own the Justice of the Divine Vengeance, lay the Torments we feel at our own doors, and read our Sentence of Condemnation again to us, with an *higher voice*. So far will that be from giving us any Comfort, that it will continually upbraid, reproach and give us *new lashes* for our Folly ; so far from mitigating and asswaging our Sorrows, that it will continually *increase* both the Pains which we already feel, and our Fears and Expectations of more and greater.

Well then, let us try to rally our *natural Courage*, and see what assistance we can have from that ; but alas ! there is hardly any such thing as natural Courage left to a Man in this case. For *wickedness, condemn'd by her own witness, is very timorous, and being press'd with Conscience, always forecasteth grievous things*; Wisd. 17. 11. and, what between their *sufferings* and their *fears*, the buffetings of their own *Reason* and *Conscience*, and the *terrors of God set in array against them*, the *stout hearted are spoil'd*, their spirits quite broken, and the *strong Men bow themselves*. Job. 6. 4.

Nor is this the worst of the case neither : But, as Philosophers observe that *the corruption of the best things is worst*, and, as the most healthy Constitutions bear sickness worst, so here ; the greater our natural *Cou-*
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rage and Sprightliness us'd to be, the greater will our dejection and uneasiness now prove: The higher and faster our Spirits us'd to run, the more sensibly shall we now feel this cruel damp and check upon them.

But are those without us no better able to assist us, than we are our selves? Can our Friends, who have help'd to support us under so many and great Afflictions, do us no good in this? Vain Creatures! what Friends, can we think, will be able to save us from the inward scourgings of our own Minds: to skreen us from God's wrath, and keep off the *Arrows of his vengeance* from us? What Medicines can our Friends bring to heal our wounded Minds with, but Reasonings and Arguments and with what Arguments shall they plead for us, like those with which we plead against our selves? What one Topic of Comfort have they left in store, to pour, like *Balm*, into the deep and ghastly wounds of such a troubled Spirit? will they not rather, like *Job's* Friends, tho' with much more reason, *Heap up words against us and shake their Heads at us?* Job. 16. 4.

Could they indeed, as it is pretended the Church of *Rome* can, out of their Treasury and over stock of good works, supply us: and, by so doing, make us as truly Righteous in God's sight, as if they had been our own; this, tho' it would not support us under a wounded Spirit, yet would take away the cause of it, and by that means, remove it from us. But alas! we never had but one Friend in the whole World, who was able, in the least, to plead any merits that could be available for us: and him we have made our Enemy.

But has, our old Friend, the Devil no comfort or support for us? Oh no! All that ever he was able to do, to support us against these Terrors, was, by Lyes and false Glosses, by Sophistry and Artifice, to make us doubt of the reality of them, or else make us impute them to some such cause, as should take away the dreadfulnes of them. But these shifts will serve now no more; for too plainly we feel them, to be able to doubt of the reality

ality of them: too clear an account we see of them, in God's Justice and Threatnings, to leave room to dispute about the cause of them. Besides, even in this sense, *Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world;* 1 Joh. 4. 4. our own awakn'd Consciences, and the hand of God within us, are an over-match for the Devil, and defy all his Wiles and Stratagems, all his Strength and Power, how many and great soever. Nay so refin'd and unprejudic'd are our Understandings now become, that there is nothing clearer to us, than that the Devil himself did all, that in spite and malice he could, to bring us into this woful Condition: and therefore, tho' he were able, is not to be rely'd upon for help in it. Nay farther, it is now very plain to us, that the Devil himself is in our very case, and yet cannot help himself; and, if he cannot keep himself from *trembling* at the Thoughts of his own Condition, in vain must it be to expect that he should Inspire us with Courage enough, not to *tremble* at ours. James 2. 19. No, the Thoughts of his *trembling* must necessarily increase ours: his inability to help himself must needs spoil all our hope and confidence in him.

Still perhaps it will be pretended, that a Dose of *Physic*, or of *Wine*, *Good Company*, *Exercise*, or *Diversion*, will give us certain ease, and free us from these troublesome *Terrors* of our own Minds. And, supposing that they could do so, yet what is this to the purpose? We are not talking of getting rid of them (for that no doubt may be easily done, for a time, by a sufficient Dose of any Opiate or strong Liquor, or any other way of rendering us insensible; nay it is to be hop'd, generally speaking, that it may be done, for ever, in a much better way, by Repentance and a thorough Reformation of Heart and Life) but we are talking of maintaining and supporting our selves, of keeping our selves from sinking and desponding, of bearing up with any measure of cheerfulness and courage, while we are *awake* and in our right Senses, and under the actual sting and smart

smart of them. This is to bear afflictions, the other only to seek hiding places for them; and what will all the *Physic, Wine, Good Company, Exercise, or Diversion*, in the World help towards this? What manner of relation or dependance, in the least, is there, between those, which are *burthens* purely *Spiritual*, and these which are helps purely *Corporal*? As well might we hope to support a wounded Spirit, by giving it a staff to rest upon, as by such unsuitable and useles helps as these. Besides, give me leave to tell you that these ways of stifling and lulling asleep Distempers, of the Mind as well as of the Body, are but meer Cheats and Impositions upon our selves, and, in the end, only tend to increase and inflame the violence of our Distempers: and to make them, like Latent Fires not thoroughly extinguish'd, burn but the more fiercely, when they break out, and get head next.

What then shall we do, whither shall we go, or to whom shall we fly, for help? Of whom shall we seek for Succour, but of thee, *O Father of Mercies, and God of all comfort*? 2 Cor. 1. 3. When our own Reason and Strength have failed us, when our *Fathers and Mothers have forsaken us*, when all the Powers of the World (except thine own) could help us no longer, then hast thou been wont to *take us up*. Ps. 27. 10. To thee therefore let us come, and cry for Mercy. But, Oh unhappy State! we dare not so much as lift up our Eyes towards Heaven, whence we can expect nothing; but dreadful flashes of Vengeance and *fiery Indignation*. The very *Name* of God, which us'd to be comfortable to us, in all our other Afflictions, is now become one of our greatest Torments in this, and those kind of pleasing Appellations of *Father* and *Saviour*, are turn'd into those severe and affrightning ones, of *Judge* and *Avenger*. We have provok'd God beyond all measure, his *wrath is waxen hot* against us, and we cannot reasonably look for any thing else, but that it should break out in Plagues and bitterest Judgments upon us. For he is a God that
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hate all workers of iniquity: he will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy upon the ungodly: but he will rain upon them snares, fire and brimstone and a burning tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. Ps. 5. 5. Jer. 13. 4. Ps. 11. 6.

Oh dreadful State! unutterable Torments! beyond, infinitely beyond, our Strength, yet destitute even of the least support! never so much need of succour, never so little of it! Our Reason and Religion persecute us: our Natural Courage fails us: our Friends stand by and cannot help us, nay, what's worse, condemn us: the Devil neither will, nor indeed can assist us: and which is yet infinitely worse (oh how shall we bear to hear it!) our God himself, Who us'd to be our certain Friend and Helper, is now become our most bitter and implacable Enemy, and daily throws new loads of Sorrow upon us,

And, if all this be not sufficient to convince Men of the insupportableness of a wounded Conscience (as in such a case as this, where Men are unwilling to be convinc'd, who can tell what is sufficient?) you may be pleas'd to take for farther confirmation.

Secondly, The proof of *Experience*; And, if you want this (I mean, if you have never had it within your own breasts: if, from the lesser Fears, disquietudes and Uneasinesses, which the Commission of one, or but few Sins, have there enkindled, you are not able to judge of the intolerableness of those Torments, which are the effects of a long and habitual course of Sin) you may soon have it, by taking a short view of those miserable Wretches, especially upon their Sick and Dying Beds, who are possess'd with this *Legion of Devils*, a wounded Spirit. Some of which you may behold in still and sullen Silence, by their dreadful, sad, ghastly, desponding Looks, discovering Pains, too great to be express'd, flaming and raging in their inmost Souls. Others, in sudden Fits and Starts, crying out, groaning, shrieking and complaining of Torments that as much transcend all those, which Human Art or Malice ever could invent, as they do the most common and most easy and gentle Pains of Nature. Others in Agonies and unintermitting Torments, even in their sleep (if it may deserve that name) as well as when awake, roaring out *Death, Hell, Damnation and Eternity*, and cursing both themselves and their false Friends, who cheated them into this sad and deplorable Condition. Others again ready to burst with inward Grief, and incapable of any the least Ease, till they have accused themselves of such Crimes, as, they know certainly, a most ignominious and painful Death will follow. And *Lastly*, Others, still more desperate than the rest, not able in any measure to sustain their weighty load of Guilt and Woe, laying Violent Hands upon themselves, and choosing rather to run the hazard, even of Hell it self, in another World, than to bear the lashes of a Guilty Conscience, in this.

All this I could yet farther illustrate and confirm to you, from various examples of People of all sorts; (not even Princes and the greatest of Men themselves excepted) As from those, in Scripture, of *Cain*, whose consciousness of his guilt, in shedding his Brother's blood, and of the Provo-

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cation which he had thereby given to Divine Vengeance, made him even weary of his life, and afraid that every body, that should find him, would kill him; Genes. 4. 13. 14. of Saul, who, being admonish'd by the Prophet Samuel of his disobedience towards God, and of God's rejection of him thereupon, never after could enjoy any true ease and peace of Mind, but liv'd in continual grief and anguish of Soul, like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, 1 Sam. ch. 15. 16. &c. as Isaiah Elegantly describeth the Condition of wicked Men; Is. 59. 20. of Belsazzar, who, when the hand-writing upon the wall put him in mind of his impious and abominable Life, had his countenance chang'd, and his thoughts troubled him so, that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another; Dan. 5. 6. of Herod, whose sense of his baseness and injustice, in putting John the Baptist to death, had fill'd him with such fears, jealousies and suspicions, that, as soon as ever he heard of the Miracles done by our Saviour, he presently concluded that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and was greatly perplex'd with the apprehensions of what was like to befall him for his wickedness; Matt. 14. 1. Mark 6. 14. Luke 9. 7. and lastly of Judas, whose trouble and remorse, upon his having betray'd his Master, were so great, that not being able to bear them, he became his own Executioner, and soon put an end to a miserable and insupportable Life. Matt. 27. 5. From those of Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Orestes, Oedipus and Alcmaeon, taken out of Prophane History, who were all tortur'd by the Furies, as the Heathens lov'd to speak (that is, as * Tully very honestly explains it, by their own evil Consciences) to that degree, that they were like Men distracted, not knowing what to do, or whither to turn themselves for ease; fearful of Thunder and Lightning, as if they had been the bellows and flashes of hell it self; seeming to themselves to be haunted perpetually by the Ghosts, of those whom they have injur'd; nay sometimes tormented even into real distraction; committing the most horrid outrages upon themselves, tearing out their own eyes, and making frequent attempts upon themselves, always weary of life, and yet when they were capable of any reflection, fearful to the utmost of death. As also from the more modern and very remarkable instance of Francis Spira in Germany, † and, above all, from the dying Confession of a Noble and Illustrious penitent of our own Nation, who declar'd (and oh that his words may sink deep into our hearts!) that his sorrow for his sins was a most penetrating and cutting sorrow: so that, though in his body he suffered extreme Pain for some weeks, yet the Agonies of his Mind sometimes swallow'd up the Sense of what he felt in his Body; and that, tho' there were nothing to come after this life, yet all the Pleasures he had ever known in Sin (and he had known as many, as most Men that ever liv'd) were not worth that Torture he had felt in his

* Lib. 1. de leg. Suet. vit. Tib. cap. 67. Id. vit. Calig. cap. 51. Id. vit. Ner. cap. 34. Sophocl. Elec. Id. Oedip. Ovid. Met. lib. 9.

† Sleidan. Hist. Reformation. Fol. 21.

Mind. * But I hope that what has been already said, upon this Head, has been sufficient; and, I fear, the time and your patience call earnestly upon me to hasten in the

Last place, to conclude with some *practical* Reflections, upon what has been already said, And this, with all possible brevity.

Hence then we learn that the greatest evils of this Life are brought by Men upon themselves, and ought not therefore to be charg'd upon God; What Affliction have we comparable for the sting and smart of it, to that of a *wounded Conscience*? And, next to that, to that of a mind ruffled and disordered with *lusts* and *passions*; and whence come these, but from our own sin and folly?

Hence also it plainly appears, that there is such a thing, as an essential difference between what we call *moral good and evil*: Our own *Reason* and *Conscience*, and the *Divine Providence* it self, inwardly commanding, applauding and rewarding that; while, on the other hand, they do secretly forbid, condemn and punish this,

Hence likewise we have an evident proof, both that there will certainly be future punishments for the wicked, and that they will be very great. There will be an *Hell*: Else why has Nature implanted fears of it in our Minds? The *torments* of it, we may be sure, will be very great: Else how comes it to pass that the foretastes of them are so, even in this world, which is not the proper place for *finishing* and *consummating* the torments of the wicked?

Hence too we may draw an Argument for the Vindication of God's Providence, in part, in respect of the worldly prosperity of wicked Men; for tho' they may outwardly seem to succeed and live at ease in the eye of the world: Yet, so long as it is frequently their case, *so have terrors upon them, darkness hid in their secret places, and a fire not blown consuming them* Job. 20. 25. 26. (as *Zophar* elegantly describes the Condition of wicked Men) this must needs be a mighty damp and frowning to all their Enjoyments, and make them, upon the whole, not those very happy Men that they are too apt to pass with us for.

In a word, Hence it appears what a very *foolish* and *dangerous* thing a life of Sin is: Which, both in its own nature, and thro' the just Judgment of God, tends to bring upon us continual uneasinesses, grief and anxiety of Mind here; and these too, as a sure and infallible pledge of much greater Torments hereafter. As also what a barbarous and cruel thing it is, to entice and draw in other Men, more especially our Friends, to an habitual course of Sinning. Can any Man deserve the name of a Friend from him, whom he would persuade, and even constrain to do such things, as would certainly give him a fit of the *Stone* or *Strangury*? Much less can he from him, whom he would engage in the doing of that, which must necessarily bring him under the pangs and lashes of a guilty Mind, to which those compar'd are even as nothing.

* *Bp. Burnet's Life of Lord Rochester*, p. 128. 129.

To conclude all: Hence we learn both of what importance it is to us to preserve our Minds and Consciences pure and undisturb'd, or, at least, if we have been so unhappy as to wound them, to get them heal'd again as fast as ever we can: And likewise, what is the best and speediest way of doing this. Since the *torments* of a *wounded Spirit* are so great, as have been proved, it is impossible, if we consider them, but that we should be afraid of them, and be most ready to do our utmost towards keeping our selves clear of them. Since the pain of it is so intolerable, when we are under it, we must not love our selves and our own ease, if we do not make all the haste we possibly can to get rid of it; get rid of it, I say, for bear it we cannot. The wisest and the easiest way, no doubt, is to be careful to keep clear of the torments, from the beginning: And this can only be done, by keeping clear, as far as we are able, of all sins, which are, as you have seen, the certain seeds of them. *Would you never be afflicted in mind, live well: Would you be secure, do no evil.* *Isidor. Seneca*, or rather, to speak in the Words of the Apostle, *Wouldst thou not be afraid of thy Conscience, do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.* But, if thou art already entangled and beset with these torments, and wantest to get rid of them; get but rid of thy sins, which are the sting of them, and they shall wound thee no more. And there is but one way of doing this, and that is, by Repentance, and turning our selves to God. This, through the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, shall blot out all our sins, and consequently put an end to our pain, take away our guilt, and with that our punishment. Then shall God give us rest from our sorrow, nay even turn it into joy. His Holy Spirit will there again vouchsafe to take up his abode with us, and to fill us with his blessed fruits of Love, Joy, Peace, &c. and to heal us and give us strong Consolation, now that we have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Amend your lives therefore, and turn, that your sins may be put away, and that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

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